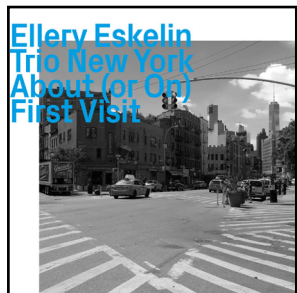


Theme/Easter Theme (Reprise)" is a great little baroque piper with fine flute work on top from Claire. "Snoopy and Woodstock" is a whimsical, elastic '70s jazz-funk vamp, almost in the vein of classic Weather Report. McCain lays down a fat, fuzzed-out riff under the steady jangle of a double-time tambourine that is looped with a tasty wah-wah guitar lick from Guaraldi. "Woodstock's Dream" is another tidy little soul-pop shuffle hooked with a bluesy piano riff.

This series of reissues is a treat for *Peanuts* completists and Guaraldi aficionados alike, and this one in particular (which was released as a limited edition Easter eggshell color vinyl) is a sweet one worth digging, novelty aside.

For more info visit mendelsonproductions.com



About (or On), First Visit
Ellery Eskelin Trio New York (ezz-thetics)
by Bill Meyer

It might be tempting to say that organ jazz and jazz standards are in tenor saxophonist Ellery Eskelin's DNA, influenced since childhood by his mother, who supported their household by playing standards in various lounges around Baltimore. There have been points in his career when Eskelin has acknowledged the music of his youth without engaging it head-on. Keyboards were notably absent from his 1996 tribute to Gene Ammons, *The Sun Died*. And in his storied trio with accordionist Andrea Parkins and drummer Jim Black, the organ sounds were sampled and the decidedly non-idiomatic tunes were Eskelin's own. But as far as his music has traveled from conventional jazz form, he has maintained a wonderfully full and judiciously breathy tone rooted in pre-free jazz, which serves him well in Trio New York's elaborations upon material originally composed by Eubie Blake, Irving Berlin and Lionel Hampton, among others.

Prior to convening Trio New York, with Gary Versace (Hammond organ) and Gerald Cleaver (drums), which recorded two albums in 2011 and 2013, Eskelin was primarily concerned with improvising freely. That's what he and Versace were doing in a private jam, when they both realized that they were unconsciously gravitating to "I Got Rhythm" changes; Eskelin recognized an opportunity to organically bring the two approaches together: solid standards and the freedom of improv. Understanding that freedom is at the heart of the music originally released on *Trio New York* and *Trio New York II*, now reissued as the double-disc *About (or On), First Visit*.

The original albums' song-titling practice, which acknowledged both the themes that the players gradually sidled up to and the conscious distance maintained from them, gives this collection its name. Both aspects of that method manifest on "About (or On)...Monk". The musicians introduce Thelonious Monk's "Off Minor" in fragments, from which they spin lucid fantasias that maintain an idiomatically swinging organ combo feel, while they abstract the tune with unsentimental ingenuity. Eskelin sticks closer to the melody on the trio's treatment of Richard Whiting's "My Ideal", titled "About (or On)...Aspiration", which frees the organist and drummer to play slow and loose around the nominal leader. Freedom here means not only freedom from

playing by rote, but also the freedom to not ignore a tune's inherent beauty and history. For Trio New York, the outcomes of such free play are profound.

For more info visit werners-ezzthetics.bandcamp.com. Eskelin is at The Stone at The New School Feb. 20 (with Sylvie Courvoisier). See Calendar.



Morricone Is Dissolving
Italian Surf Academy (41st Parallel)
by John Pietaro

Marco Cappelli, master guitarist, theorist, satirist and citizen of the world has been carving, shaping and reconstructing his craft since his early years in Italy, where he initially formed Italian Surf Academy. Wonderfully confounded, this trio bridges multiple genres and as many miles while embracing the underground as the academic; crowned by spy and surf guitar through fields punk laced, here's a singular mix of jazz, contemporary classical, rock and Spaghetti Western music. Lauded film composer Ennio Morricone (1928-2020) has long been in the purview of Cappelli, Damon Banks (bass) and Dave Miller (drums), but their latest set is an homage cut by a post-modernist prism. *Morricone Is Dissolving* is best described as an elongated, necessary suite.

Threading through much of this spectacle is the compelling prose-poetry of Denver Butson, a writer who has collaborated several times with Cappelli and violist Matt Maneri, among other improvising musicians. His gritty, road-worn baritone is the perfect complement to not only the music but the subject. Right from the opener "If You Ask Ennio Morricone", Butson's word painting, sometimes a beautiful loosening of associations, offers magical imagery of the composer and his legacy "just a moment ago," though we lost Morricone himself six years ago this July. That sound, that plectrum-attacked Western low-end we know so well establishes "Ecstasy of Gold" (built on a Morricone theme), electric guitar touching electric bass in the inseparable spot where none can tell where this ends and that begins. And then Butson returns with "In Order to Become Morricone", his poetic imagery conjuring myth. Even as the poet speaks, reverberant slide and twang guitar color the atmosphere as drums and bass fills capture the remaining space.

The central triptych "For a Fist of Dollars"/"I Want to Ask You Something"/"For a Fist of Dollars Reloaded" is a bustling fantasia of Morricone's best-known themes for filmmaker Sergio Leone, re-cast into a pulsating march with the leader plunging through distortion, wah-wah and pure tone, his twang bar acting as yet another instrument. Butson's spoken word, strained through a scotch-and-cigarette-colored larynx, ruminates on Morricone's faceless, distant place within cinema lore, and throughout, Banks and Miller are the ideal support and, at points, embattled counterpoint.

Morricone Is Dissolving deserves to be heard and seen as an expansive theatrical work. This latest Italian Surf Academy album scored as one of this writer's Best Recordings of 2025.

For more info visit 41stparallelrecords.bandcamp.com. The album release concert is at Barbès Feb. 9. See Calendar.

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